

The Castle of Lies

BY ARTHUR HENDY VESSEY
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CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

"The papers from the safe, did you say?" asked Helena in slow wonder. "Perhaps you know that I was imprisoned in the room yonder. It took me three hours to loosen the bars of the window. I made my way round the sloping roof of the towers by the stone gutter to the window of that other room. The window was open. When I gained it, and was about to enter it, I saw this man, whom I believed to be your brother, enter the room, bolt the door behind him, kneel at the safe, open it, and abstract from it a packet of papers which he now has in his pocket."

If Forbes had expected Helena to be dumfounded at this surprising news, his wish was gratified. But it was wonder tempered with infinite joy. The papers that convicted her brother of guilt had been rescued from the cruel clutch of Madame de Varner. She did not realize at once that I had steered clear of Charybdis only to fall foul to Scylla. The peril of Sir Mortimer's guilt being known was now infinitely greater than it had been half an hour ago. Helena's defense of myself, and Madame de Varner's untimely interruption, had both alienated all sympathy from Helena and strengthened his conviction that I was one of the conspirators.

If I had kept silent so long, if it seems unmanly that I should have allowed a woman to plead in my behalf—it is because I was racking my brain for a means of escape from the awkward predicament that held me captive.

"I have told you, Captain Forbes, that I have ample reason to believe in the honesty of Mr. Haddon. If he has taken any papers from the safe, it is with my fullest and deepest gratitude. It was the woman there who had stolen them from my brother. They concern only my mother and myself now that Mortimer is dead. Mr. Haddon will restore them to me."

"I shall forbid that," protested Forbes hotly. "I tell you, Miss Brett, those are papers of State. They belong to the State. I must see that they are placed in the hands of the ministers of the Foreign Office. For the last time, give me those papers."

I leaped at the loophole Helena had offered me. If I could not prevent their falling into the hands of Forbes, at least I could delay that dire event. "I shall obey you, Miss Brett. Into your hands alone shall I place those papers."

"If you please," she said with dignity, and held out a hand that did not tremble to receive them.

And still I hesitated. I saw the gleam of resolution in the glitter of Forbes' blue eyes. If I produced the paper now it would be only to have the king's messenger snatch them from my grasp. Forbes turned to Helena in angry triumph.

"You see, Miss Brett, he hesitates. The woman and himself are as reluctant that the papers fall into your hands as they are that I obtain them. He thinks that he may trick you, as he has already once tricked me. Is there nothing I can say to shake your blind confidence in this treacherous impostor?"

"Nothing," said Helena, with resolution; but I could see her troubled surprise at my reluctance.

"Then I shall be forced to resort to violence. I am going to have those papers, and at once. If you are so fitted to the grave danger of letting this man keep the papers, even for the moment, I am not. How could he have taken them from the safe unless it were with the permission and perhaps at the entreaty of this Madame de Varner?"

"The inference is clear enough, I should think—she must have left the door of the safe open."

Helena spoke confidently, but trust in me had been put to a sore test. "Your credulity is very great if you think that. Why, madam, I saw him deliberately work the combination of the safe."

Helena uttered a cry of horror at my supposed treachery. Her trust was shattered.

"I could not dream of a villainy so hypocritical."

Instinctively she came close to Forbes' side as if for protection. She had read in my eyes that Forbes spoke the truth. No words of mine could convince her now of my sincerity.

Madame de Varner had been quite forgotten by us all. Until now she had been listening in breathless silence. Forbes' declaration that I had taken the papers must have seemed to her the sheerest absurdity. She had been certain that she had locked the safe; she was equally certain that no one but herself knew the word by which it might be opened. She must have thought, too, that my tacit confession of taking the papers was a ruse to deceive her, though she could not guess its purpose.

But when Captain Forbes asserted with evident sincerity that he had seen me working the combination her anxiety became unendurable. At the risk of being surprised at the safe, she had stolen quietly to the room, thinking herself unobserved. But through our backs had been turned from the room, I had seen her movement by her shadow cast on the floor by the setting sun pouring in the open window through which Captain Forbes had made his entrance.

I clutched the arm of the king's messenger; I made an imperious gesture for action and silence. I pointed to Madame de Varner disappearing into the little room of the safe. With a motion incredibly light for so heavy a man Forbes tiptoed after her, and

watched her open the safe through the half-closed door.

It was only a question of instants before she had thrown open the door of the safe with a cry of dismay. But that instant sufficed.

As Forbes turned his back to me I took swiftly from my pocket the two packets. One envelope was plain, with no writing on it. The other was addressed to Sir Mortimer Brett and bore a foreign stamp.

No word was spoken. I had but to hold the two packets before Helena. In an instant she had hidden in the bosom of her dress the first packet I have mentioned, whose envelope was plain; the other I returned to my pocket.

Madame de Varner sprang to her feet with the litheness of a tigress. She came toward me as I stood by Forbes' side with a rage that was dreadful in its intensity.

Before I could guess at her purpose she had torn my coat open and seized the packet I had placed there. She pressed it into Forbes' hand. Her bitter rage and disappointment made her oblivious of the fact that she had given only one of the packets.

"Take it!" she screamed. "Take it! Ah, M. Coward, you are clever, but it shall avail you nothing. At least I shall have my revenge."

Forbes buttoned his coat over the papers he had received with an



"Take it!" she screamed. "Take it!"

amazed but grim satisfaction. Helena, standing apart from us, was convulsively clenching and unclenching her hands. Unseen by the other two, I cast her a meaning glance that she should exert her strong will to regain her poise. When they looked at her she stood passive and acquiescent. As for myself, I affected an air of chagrin and defeat.

"You will bear me witness, Miss Brett, that I did my best to place the packet in your hand. I can only hope that Captain Forbes will restore you those papers without reading them, or that they are of little importance."

"Little importance!" hissed Madame de Varner. "Sir, guard those papers well; your ministers at Downing street will not thank you if you lose them. And now, M. Coward, that you have conquered me, but not robbed me of my revenge, how much longer are we to stay here?"

Captain Forbes showed little surprise at the turn affairs had taken. He interpreted Madame de Varner's move as that of one who had betrayed a confederate for motives of revenge. While he recognized the fact, he mistook the motive.

"And they speak of honor among thieves!" he sneered in an aside to Helena.

I feared that Helena might make an indignant protest. But she said nothing. I supposed her silence dictated by prudence; this was no time to champion my cause. But as I looked at her I read her perplexity in her troubled eyes. I had given her back the papers indeed, but that I should have known the combination was too startling a fact to be accepted without distrust. I could have known the combination only from Madame de Varner; that proved to me to have been in her confidence. If I had repented and betrayed my accomplice in my remorse, she was grateful for the act itself, but she could no longer trust me.

"As this woman says," Forbes was speaking to me, "there is nothing to be gained here longer. But you, sir, as well as this woman, will leave this room only to be placed under arrest. You must consider yourself my prisoner."

With these words he strode toward the door of the staircase, and, turned the handle.

"It is locked," he said sternly. "Who has the key?"

I handed it to him in silence. As he received it from me he glanced meaningfully toward Helena. It was one more link in the chain of evidence. I confess I could have wished the key had not been in my pocket.

He turned the key. To the consternation of all of us the door still resisted his efforts. He exerted all his strength to no purpose.

"What new trick is this?" he demanded furiously of me.

"I think," it was to Madame de Varner I answered, "that Dr. Starva has taken the precaution of insuring himself a free field."

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Ladder of Stones.

Madame de Varner had been seated in sullen apathy. At my words she looked up at me for a moment in dull surprise. Then slowly, as if a mask had fallen over her face, an expression of horror and insane fury disfigured her beauty. She rushed to the door; she shook it frantically; she beat on it futile blows.

"What does it mean, this locked door?" demanded Forbes of me once more.

"It means that Dr. Starva, the ally of this woman, for some purpose of his own, has imprisoned us here," I answered calmly. "Even you, Captain Forbes, will not accuse me of fastening the bolt."

He turned from me in contemptuous silence. "It is only a question of a few hours at the most," he said reassuringly to Helena. "At dawn we can attract the attention of some one from the street. In the meanwhile we must be patient."

"I am thankful that you were able to make your way to me," said Helena brokenly. "It would be dreadful to be here alone with my brother lying dead in that room."

"Are we to make no effort?" I demanded. "Surely in some way—"

My words were arrested on my lips. Madame de Varner had abandoned

himself. Madame de Varner and I were alone.

"I hope you are satisfied, madame, with your adventure in this Castle of Happiness," she said with a hysterical sob.

"I am waiting for the climax," I answered significantly. "Is it to be a comedy or a tragedy?"

"Oh, God!" she raised her clenched hands in a gesture full of anguish. "It is I who am asking that."

"Why did you look at me in that manner. You wish to tell me something—to warn me."

"The death-mask!" she whispered. Her emotion suffocated her. "Why should Dr. Starva have imprisoned us here, unless—"

I looked at her stupefied.

"But Prince Ferdinand is not here at the chateau."

Her self-control vanished utterly. She clung to me in her despair.

"Save him! Save him!"

"But Ferdinand is not at the chateau!" I repeated.

"Last night—in the music room—that death-mask!" She spoke incoherently, but her meaning was too clear.

"You knew that he was coming here?"

"When you told me of the death-mask, when I saw the rage of Dr. Starva—I realized his danger. Yes, he was coming here—to-night. But I telegraphed him that at all costs he must not come. But if Dr. Starva by some means intercepted that telegram—"

"Who sent it?" I questioned anxiously.

"Jacques."

"Then your prince is doomed. It was Jacques who betrayed to me your presence here. I thought it was because I bribed him sufficiently well. Be sure of this, he is Starva's creature."

"Heavens, how you torture me! But if this is true, why did he allow Sir Mortimer's sister to come to me? He must have known that you sent for her."

"With ourselves she would be safely out of the way. Dr. Starva is more ingenious than I have given him the credit of being. We are caught like rats in a trap."

"But you must save him!"

"Impossible!"

"Listen; it is not impossible. There is a ladder—not on this side, but beneath the window of the oratory."

Her eyes glittered in the semi-darkness. She placed a finger on my lips. I had cried out in my surprise.

"A ladder of a hundred feet or more! And it stands against the wall of the tower!" I exclaimed incredulously.

"Besides, if it were there, Captain Forbes must have seen it."

"This ladder, I call it so for want of a better name, is made of great stones half as long as one's forearm that project from the smooth masonry at intervals of a foot. The chateau is old, very old. In feudal times, with a stout rope, one might escape from the tower. But it is impossible! We have no rope. She wrung her hands.

"But if this ladder of stones reaches from roof to terrace, it would be simple enough without a rope. The stones are built out at regular intervals. How far are they apart?"

"At intervals of a foot, they reach in a straight line for 100 feet. But the chateau is 150 feet high. These stones begin at the roof. No one could drop that 50 feet to the marble terrace below and live. Yes; we are caught like rats in a trap."

"Fifty feet! It would mean a broken limb, if not certain death. But if a rope could be knotted of our clothing for half that distance!"

I went into the room through whose window the king's messenger had made his untimely entrance. I leaned far out of the window, shuddering. I was resolved to make the descent myself. Twice I had proved myself a coward. This was to be my chance, unless Forbes should stubbornly refuse to believe in the existence of Ferdinand's danger.

The moon was rising; it shed an unearthly light on the pale face of Madame de Varner as she looked up at me anxiously. The wind came in fitful gusts.

Suddenly there sounded a thunder report. At first I thought it thudded in the far-away mountains. But as I listened intently the mysterious sound was repeated again and again, though more and more feebly. And it came from above.

"Do you hear it, that strange, muffled clap?" I asked of Madame de Varner.

She took my place at the open window. For some moments she heard nothing. Then, strangely enough, though the wind was blowing almost a gale, it sounded distinctly.

"It is a flag on the high flagstaff of the central tower," she said presently. "But who can have given orders that it be raised?"

"That is a matter of indifference," I said joyfully. "An ensign so large as that requires a fairly substantial cord. If we can get that cord and plait it—Where is it fastened? Surely at one of these windows?"

"No," she said anxiously. "It is Dr. Starva who has raised that flag. But why?" The question seemed to increase her anxiety.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

POOR SHADE OF ROYALTY

Baroness Harden-Hickey
Once Ruled in Royal
State on the Island of
Trinidad, Now with Mind
Hopelessly Gone, Is in
Sanitarium with Delusions
of Former Greatness Her
Only Comfort.

New York.—"Almost a queen!" fit title for a modern melodrama, this phrase which, in invisible characters, is written over the door of a private room in a sanitarium at Stamford, Conn. Almost it might be called an epitaph, for behind that door sits the mental wreck of a New York woman who ruled figuratively by her beauty and charm, and literally by the title



BARON JACQUES HARDEN-HICKEY

conferred upon her by her own husband, his highness, Jacques I., prince of Trinidad.

To-day Baroness Anne Harden-Hickey has for her subjects only devoted attendants and fellow-delusionists, each of whom in his or her way rules over a little kingdom which none other may enter. For the once beautiful and gifted daughter of J. H. Flagler, cousin of Henry M. Flagler, the Standard Oil magnate, has lost her reason. The death of her dervish husband, whom she worshipped, and drugs, taken to forget her loss and grief, have done their work. The woman who was almost a queen will never mingle with the world again.

On East Fifty-fourth street, between Third and Lexington avenues, they still talk of the stately woman who walked among them unseemingly, save when she performed some regal act of kindness or charity. There, in a commonplace apartment house, she kept up her little court circle and forgot all else. A few of her immediate family she received as her equals; all others were given a regal audience. And yet an audience was eagerly sought by her neighbors, for despite certain eccentricities which come with failing mentality, Baroness Harden-Hickey was a woman of marvelous charm. Her neighbors never laughed at her. Thoughtless children never pointed the finger of youthful scorn at her wavering figure. Tradespeople and policemen on the beat rose as one man to protect her coming and her going—but few, indeed, knew the true history of their almost queen.

Wooded While Being Educated.

Baroness Harden-Hickey, born Anne Flagler, received every advantage, and her education was completed by several trips abroad. On one of these she met and was wooed by Jacques or James Harden-Hickey, as dashing a character as the nineteenth century ever knew outside of book covers. He claimed to be a Frenchman by birth, but rumor has it that he was born in San Francisco in 1854 and removed to France at a very tender age. However this may have been, he grew up a pronounced royalist, and after the establishment of the republic was a diverting political figure. After being graduated from the French military school at St. Cyr, where he left a brilliant record as a duelist at least, he established a newspaper of his own called the *Triboulet*. As he was only 23, his career as an editor and publisher was marked by a succession of duels, fines for damages, assessed by the French tribunals, and strong animosity among the Republican politicians, rather than subscribers and financial returns. It ended in his fleeing to London, where he found life altogether too tame, so he took passage on the British bark *Astoria*, to

"LOST COLONY" IS FOUND.

Evidence That It Settled on Roanoke Island in Sixteenth Century.

The mystery of mysteries in our American chronicle has been solved at last. The famous "Lost Colony of Roanoke" has been traced and its descendants found in an obscure region where they still retain the ancestral names, cherish traditions that explain many of the gaps in history and preserve customs brought over by their forefathers, who vanished utterly from the ken of the mother country, says a writer in Appleton's Magazine. I have been among them and talked with them. The story of the lost colony is familiar to every student of American history. It will be remembered that Queen Elizabeth granted to Sir Walter Raleigh a patent "to discover, search, find out and view such remote, heathen, and barbarous lands, countries and territories not actually possessed of any Christian prince."

The first expedition landed on Roanoke Island July 4 (old style),

see the world. Off the southeast coast of Brazil, in the South Atlantic, the boat was thrown out of its course by a storm, and a boat's crew, including their passenger keen for adventure, went ashore on a precipitous island named Trinidad for water and such fresh provisions as might be picked up.

The crew found an abandoned Portuguese settlement, buildings falling to decay, all signs of cultivation hidden by wild vines and plants.

The imagination of Jacques Harden-Hickey was fired. He saw that with cultivation crops might be raised. There were fields of guano and pasture enough for sheep raising and, best of all, the island was unclaimed by any power. Some day he would be king of this island.

On his return to Europe he met Anne Flagler, and in less than a year had won and married her by a special dispensation of the pope, who also created him a baron. This was in 1889. In 1893 he realized his ambition. Financed largely by his wife and her relatives, though there were rumors of a \$100,000 loan, he landed his colonists on the forlorn little island of Trinidad, and there he set up his court. His overseers were white, but the land was cultivated by peons. His palace was a mere hut, but it stood apart from the rest, and his court was held as punctiliously as that of St. James. To be sure, there was a great shortage in court ladies, but the beauty and enthusiasm of his devoted wife, who entered into all his plans, made his peculiar kingdom a paradise.

But one fatal mistake had been made. The foreign powers had been formally notified that the island of Trinidad had been colonized as an independent state or principality under Prince Jacques I., and two years later, in 1895, Great Britain decided that she needed just that island for a future coaling station. Their movements accelerated by a British gunboat, the colonists fled from the island in the yacht of their prince and princess.

For years Jacques I. of Trinidad fought for the recognition of his rights and almost made Trinidad an international issue. But after being mixed up in a filibustering scheme aimed at one of the Hawaiian islands not yet annexed to the United States, the Harden-Hickey star waned. Always accompanied by his devoted wife, he led a more or less adventurous career, and finally wound up in El Paso, Tex., where a pistol shot



MAP OF TRINIDAD

ended his disappointments, in February, 1898.

Adventurer though he was, Harden-Hickey was a man of honor and financial probity—the type of man who commands the respect of his wife—and Anne, princess of Trinidad, never ceased to grieve for him.

A Parlor Her Throne Room.

She came north, and though her personal fortune had been dissipated through her loyalty to her husband and his many schemes she was amply provided for by her relatives. Society no longer charmed her. To ease her aching heart and find comfort in sleep she took to choral, and then began her new life—the life in which she was, to her own diseased mind at least, a veritable queen.

The comfortable front room or parlor of her small apartment at No. 147 East Fifty-fourth street became her throne-room. Here she graciously received and mingled with her relatives, who never ceased to humor her in her desires and whims. Here, on rare occasions and with due form, she received such neighbors as she felt worthy of admission. And here she lived with a single lady-in-waiting, who never failed to bring out the royal robes when they were demanded, who served meals to her sovereign with all the glittering formality the apartment's simple fittings would permit; and from the humble door of the graystone apartment-house Baroness Anne passed out, when so inclined, to drive or walk her triumphant way through the neighborhood.

Always stately and gentle, gracious and especially kindly to children, she never became an object of pity or

scorn in the humble neighborhood. She never mumbled to herself, as those who live in a world of their own oftentimes do. She carried herself like a princess and never became grotesque.

Walked in Regal State.

To be sure, her costumes were not always of that tailor-made brand affected by New York's well-groomed women. Sometimes she decided that her triumphal progress through the streets would be heightened by an all-over lace frock, worthy indeed of a court appearance, though decidedly behind the times. But the court train was there, the feathered headdress, the dainty handkerchief and fan, the high-heeled shoes, and the royal carriage of one who had been almost a queen.

When she entered a shop in the neighborhood and left an order she did not haggle about prices nor limit her purchases by mere pounds or quarts. She ordered as for a royal household, and the tradespeople knew how much should be sent. No one imposed on the queen of East Fifty-fourth street.

Map of Trinidad.

Sometimes, when the choral had been less deadening than usual, Anne Baroness Anne would catch fragments of some neighborly sorrow. Then indeed did the queenly nature come to the surface. With all the graciousness which a Victoria might show to the family of a hero, to which Anne added the democratic personal sympathy which a real queen may not display, she would go to the stricken one and minister financially and spiritually. The children of the neighborhood built fairy tales about the mysterious woman who sat all day long in her apartment in queenly state, waiting for the king who had passed out of her life forever. Or, again, she came slowly into their midst and waited for an open carriage—a victoria preferred—in which she might lean back and bow graciously from side to side as the women and children of the neighborhood saluted her. The cabbies all knew her and stood at attention as she entered her vehicle. The motormen on the Third avenue and Lexington avenue cars knew her, too, and watched for the quaint figure which stopped not for trolleys nor trucks nor ambulances, but swept serenely on its way across crowded thoroughfares, secure in the belief that no man would run down a queen.

Sudden Disappearance.

But there came a day when her wanderings led too far from the graystone apartment-house, when her lady-in-waiting could no longer control the household expenditures and the charities of the woman who was almost a queen drained upon the purses even of her millionaire relatives. Then Baroness Anne Harden-Hickey disappeared from her little kingdom on East Fifty-fourth street. Her neighbors spoke of her regretfully. The cabbies and the motormen looked for her in vain. Their erstwhile queen was in the care of relatives who had spirited her away, far from prying eyes and gossiping tongues. For almost a year she lived thus in retirement; where, none but her family knew. Then came the public announcement that Baroness Anne Harden-Hickey had been removed to the Stamford sanitarium, there to reign over her imaginary sub-



BARONESS HARDEN-HICKEY

jects and to await the call of her princely consort from that dark and uncertain shore whither he had preceded her on adventures which she had always yearned to share with him.

The Teacher.

If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love of fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity.—Daniel Webster.

Showed Traces of His Business

A blind street musician, reports a Chinese paper, stood on the shore of a river, puzzled how to cross the stream. He implored an oil dealer, who happened to come along, to assist him. The oil dealer had pity on the helpless man, took him on his shoulders, gave him his money bag to hold and carried him across. When he deposited his burden on the other shore the blind man refused to return him his money bag, raised a noise and declared that the money was his property. The matter came before the judge, and each man said on oath that the money belonged to him. The judge finally ordered the bag of money emptied into a water tank, and then suddenly announced that the oil dealer was the owner. When asked for the reason for his decision, he declared that the money of the oil dealer must

certainly show traces of his business, and, indeed on the surface of the water traces of oil were found.

Disgrace to the Profession.

Wareham Long—I ain't arskin' fur somethin' to eat, mister. I'm tryin' to raise a little money so's I can git out o' this town. I need a change of air.

Fellaire (formerly Rusty Rufus)—You do, you grimy old fraud, but you need a change of shirts a thundering sight worse. Here's a dollar and a kick, to assist you in effecting both of those changes. Have the goodness to move on.

Howe Has Small Stomach.

In proportion to its size, the house has the smallest stomach of any quack-

what happened in phrases of unconscious poetry, giving a strangely vivid picture of the loneliness of the New World and the Lost Colony.

"We let fall our Grapnel neere the shore & sounded with a trumpet a Call, & afterwards many familiar English tunes of Songs and called to them friendly; but we had no answer."

Gov. White gave up the search and nothing more is known of him. Raleigh, ruined financially, having spent \$200,000 on his colony without a penny of recompense, turned over his grants to the London company, with the advice that they seek to colonize Chesapeake Bay, and later the settlement at Jamestown was made. Raleigh urged the new colonists to seek the old, but both the Crostons and the colonists had totally disappeared.

I first heard the tradition of the present existence of Raleigh's Lost Colony here at Manton, named after the old chief who went to England and was made "Lord of the Island of Roanoke and Dasamunguepe"—the first of all American titles.